

*American Folklore Society Annual Meeting
Atlanta, GA
October 20-22, 2005*

Finding Funding for Your Work

Friday, October 21, 2005

1:30-5:15 p.m.

Barry Bergey (National Endowment for the Arts)
Robert Baron (New York State Council on the Arts)
Betsy Peterson (The Fund for Folk Culture)

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This document reports on a professional development workshop for graduate students and new professionals in the field of folklore studies sponsored by the AFS at its 2005 annual meeting in Atlanta. The Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts provided funding for this workshop.

Know Your Project. Before you approach a funder do your homework. Develop a clear sense of the project and/or activity you wish to propose. Think about what makes your project unique. Focus on what measures you will take to evaluate the success of your project and also what outcomes/benchmarks might be appropriate. Refrain from seeking funding for the sake of finding \$ and think beyond applying to the usual suspects. Look for funding after you've decided on the project.

Know Your Funders: Public vs. Private Funding

Public Funding: Federal (National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities); Regional; State (State Arts Agencies and Humanities Councils); Local/Municipal funds (Cultural Affairs Bureaus). These funders typically:

- review grant applications using peer review panels
- fund organizations (501c3 or University) rather than individuals
- encourage staff to provide advice to potential grantees (program officers are public servants – they can review and suggest improvements for draft grant applications as well as provide comments if a grant application is rejected)
- require funds from other sources, usually as matching grants- you must raise \$ in addition to the grant you receive
- require residency/nonprofit status in the funders' territory (national, state, etc.)

Private Funding: Family Foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, Mellon, Woodruff); Community-based Foundations (Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta; etc.); Corporate Foundations (Coca-Cola; UPS; etc.) Clearinghouse information about these foundations can be found using www.foundationdirectoryonline.org. These funders typically:

- review applications through staff and then approve them through board/trustees
- fund organizations (501(c)(3) or University) but are also able to fund individuals
- do not encourage extensive contact with program officers and staff

- post comprehensive guidelines on their website listing how they wish to be contacted and if they accept unsolicited proposals

Know Who's Been Funded in the Past. Study the characteristics of organizations or individuals that/who have received grants from the potential funder. How do the organizations describe themselves and their mission? What is their budget size and how much funding have they typically received from the target funder? What types of projects have been supported by the funder and what were the intended audiences for these projects? All of this information can also be found on funder websites, annual reports, and 990 tax forms (found for private foundations at www.guidestar.org.)

Collaborate. Connect with colleagues/professors/advisors – most of these folks have looked for their own funding and are more than willing to share advice and/or serve as a reference to a program officer at your potential funding organization. Your local state folk arts representatives are also great resources/potential partners (a directory is available at: www.afsnet.org/tapnet/index.htm).

It's also helpful to find a nonprofit organization or university that will serve as your umbrella and help you receive funding under their auspices. Look at your partner organization as you would a funder - what would they get out of this partnership? Will you write the grant for them? How much of the grant money will they receive? Will your project provide a product that they can have their name on and distribute? Have you shown them your previous work?

More is Not Always Better. If possible, write an application narrative succinctly (OFTEN, 3 to 5 pages) as long as it answers all of the questions asked of you in the application guidelines. Most review panels have 5-10 minutes to review your application. Be persuasive, but avoid overblown rhetoric.

Support Materials. If support letters are allowed, send the strongest letters from individuals that know you and your work over the individuals who have "big name" status, but know nothing about your work. Provide letters from your audience (if you're making a film, get a letter from a TV channel or another organization that would be excited to distribute your film – someone who has seen your work.) If your application requires work samples or recommends them, send high quality samples (CD's, Slides, DVD's, brochures etc.) they can make or break an application.

Be Creative.

Be a chameleon – folklore is a relatively small field with a relatively small amount of funding, and there are only a few funding programs specifically dedicated to folklore – learn how you can articulate what you want to do using the paradigms of other fields. Don't just think about funding for "folk arts" think about funding for youth or for disadvantaged communities -- what audience might receive the benefit of your project? How can you make your dissertation work part of a larger project so that you aren't limited by typical funding restrictions?

Overlapping Funding.

Typically, you cannot apply to an agency or foundation over an overlapping period for the same project. No double-dipping.

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Learn from Rejection. Many times, peer review panels make their comments available to unsuccessful applicants. Before you re-apply, make sure that you address the issues pointed out in previous panel comments. If there are no written comments available, try to schedule time with a program officer to discuss how your application might be improved. .

Find a comprehensive list of funders and programs developed in 2003:

Professional Development in Folklore: A Resource Guide for Graduate Students & New Professionals
http://www.afsnet.org/annualmeet/2005/Resource_Manual.doc